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The Two-Year College Drop-In Student: A New Perspective.

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This study examined the "drop-in" the student who has dropped out of a 4-year college and enrolled in a 2-year college. It proposed to primarily (1) identify his expectations, (2) discover his goals, and (3) determine his perception of the two institutions, and secondarily to find out why he (1) dropped out of the 4-year college and (2) selected a particular 2-year college. A 6-item questionnaire was sent to 72 drop-ins at two junior colleges, 54 usable replies were received. It asked (1) why he left the 4-year college, (2) why he selected the particular junior college, (3) what he expected to accomplish, (4) what were his plans after college, (5) how he compared his experience in both colleges, and (6) if he had it to do over, would he go to the 2-year college first. To question one, most replied dismissal or suspension, lack of funds, or lack of goal; to two, most said low cost, location, or influence of parents or friends; for three, most listed readmission to a 4-year college, improvement of grades, or personal satisfaction; to four, most said they planned to transfer to a different 4-year college; return to the one they had left, or take full-time work; to five, students rated the 2-year college high in quality of instruction, student-faculty relationships, individual attention, and counseling services, but low in "collegiate" atmosphere and in social, cultural, and recreational activities; and to six, well over half said they would attend the junior college first. (HH)

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THE TWO-YEAR COLLEGE DROP-IN STUDENT: A NEW PERSPECTIVE

Robert T. Lembke

Attrition is a common problem of all institutions of higher education, evidenced by the abundance of research related to the college drop-out. The basic contention of this study is that many college drop-outs, particularly freshmen, subsequently enroll in two-year colleges. Such students would logically have unique experiences and perceptions of their collegiate environments.

The problem is to provide additional insight into the perceptions of the drop-out following enrollment in the two-year college. The term drop-in will be used to describe the drop-out who has subsequently enrolled in (and is presently attending) a two-year college. The term two-year college will be used in referring to publicly supported community and/or junior colleges, unless otherwise specified or cited.

The primary purposes were to (1) identify certain expectations of the drop-in student, (2) determine their future plans and/or goals, and (3) summarize their subjective perceptions of the two-year college and the previously attended institution.

The secondary purposes were to (1) verify a number of factors affecting the student's decisions to drop-out of the previously attended institution and (2) determine a number of factors which influenced the student's enrollment in their respective two-year colleges.

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Two-year colleges have done little, if any, research regarding the drop-in student. Such institutions (1) are unaware of the number of drop-in students enrolled, (2) fail to view the drop-in student as unique, or (3) tend to lack motivation or resources to undertake research. The findings of this study should be of interest to both two-year and four-year institutions and their student personnel staffs.

Dalrymple (1967) defines drop-out as a term identifying an individual terminating his education due to one or more reasons. He comments that most attrition studies classify drop-outs according to circumstances of withdrawal.

Various psychological and sociological factors are related to college withdrawal. Carlson & Wegner (1965) and Bevan (1965) investigated the relationship of social, economic, and academic pressures to student attrition. Need patterns and abilities of drop-outs have also been studied (Chambers, Barger, & Lieberman, 1965). A study was reported by Levenson (1965) in which over 100 students who had withdrawn voluntarily were interviewed by psychiatrists.

A study of freshmen attrition (Brown & Callis, 1959) found the most frequently indicated reasons for withdrawal to be (1) financial problems, (2) homesickness, (3) marriage or pregnancy, (4) size of the institution, and (5) lack of goals, interest, or motivation. They noted that males were more likely to be suspended or dismissed, while females tended to withdraw voluntarily or complete the semester before dropping out. Eckland (1964) analysed student's stated reasons for withdrawal and found that students who indicated lack of goals, military service, and/or personal

problems as factors would likely seek re-admission later.

The previously cited studies have been primarily concerned with attempts to categorize reasons for withdrawal, to identify potential drop-outs, and/or to reduce attrition rates. The problem of where the drop-out can go, however, is just as important as why he dropped out! Stern (1962) and Plummer & Richardson (1964) speculate that the two-year college may provide the answer. Knoell & Medsker (1965) surveyed drop-outs from many four-year institutions (who had previously attended two-year colleges) and indicated that a number of them had returned to two-year colleges.

It is relevant to ascertain what factors influence enrollment in two-year colleges. A recent study (Schultz, 1967) requested students to rank reasons for attending such institutions. The most frequently mentioned factors were (1) living at home, (2) low cost, and (3) suited needs. When the same students were asked whether or not they would attend the two-year college again (if they were starting over) 43.9 percent replied "definitely would" and 33.9 percent replied "probably would".

Method

Iowa Lake Community College (ILCC), Estherville, Iowa, and Jefferson College (JC), Hillsboro, Missouri, cooperated in the study. The primary reason for the inclusion of two institutions was to attain a sufficient number of participants--not to compare (directly) the cooperating colleges or their drop-in students. The participants were those students currently enrolled (Fall Semester, 1967-68) who had previously attended other collegiate institutions. The investigator was granted access to the academic records of

both cooperating colleges to identify specific participants. A total of 72 two-year college drop-in students (42 at ILCC and 30 at JC) were identified.

A questionnaire, designed and pre-tested by the investigator, was considered to be appropriate to the study. The questionnaire provided objective responses--and degrees of influence--to the following items: (1) What factors affected your decision to leave the college of your previous enrollment?, (2) What factors led you to select the college which you are presently attending?, (3) What do you expect to accomplish in the two-year college?, and (4) What are your plans upon leaving the two-year college? The participants were also requested to complete two subjective items: (5-A) How would you compare your experiences at the two-year college with your experiences at the institution you previously attended?, and (5-B) If you had it to do over again, would you have attended the two-year college first?

The degrees of influence of each response (on items 1-4) were given differential weight--two points for strong and one point for moderate--which established an index value. The respective index values determined the composite rank order of responses to each item. The subjective statements, in response to item 5-A, were categorized and summarized. The responses (Yes-No) to item 5-B were tabulated and analysed according to various classifications of students.

Differences in the rank order of responses on the objective items--between the ILCC and the JC participants--were tested for significance at the .05 level. Spearman's Rank Order coefficient of correlation (Rho) and a related t test were considered to be appropriate statistical procedures.

Chi Square (Yates' Correction) was used in the analysis of Yes-No responses--male-female; freshmen-sophomore; ILCC-JC--on item 5-B, and tested for significance at the .05 level.

The student personnel administrators at the cooperating two-year colleges facilitated the distribution, completion, and return of the questionnaires by their respective students.

Results

A total of 54 questionnaires (75%) were properly completed and returned. The respondents included 32 of 40 ILCC drop-in students (76%) and 22 of 30 JC drop-in students (73%). The 18 drop-in students who did not respond had been suspended, dismissed, or had voluntarily withdrawn from their respective two-year colleges prior to distribution of the questionnaire. An attempt to reach them by follow-up letters produced only one response (which was improperly completed and discarded). As indicated in Table 1, the participants were equally divided by class (27 freshmen; 27 sophomores). Differentiation by sex indicated that 41 students (76%) were male and that 13 students (24%) were female.

Insert Table 1 about here

Suspension or dismissal, cost or finances, and lack of goals or motivation were the highest ranked (composite) factors which affected the drop-in student's decisions to drop-out of their previously attended institutions. All of the factors and their ranks are presented in Table 2. Rank order differences ($Rho = .64$) between the ILCC and JC students were attributed to chance.

Cost or finances, location or distance, and parents and/or friends were the highest ranked (composite) factors affecting the drop-in student's selection of their respective two-year colleges. All of the factors and their ranks are presented in Table 3. It is apparent that rank order differences ($Rho = .48$) between the ILCC and JC students were affected by non-chance variables, directly or indirectly related to college selection by the individual student.

Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here

The drop-in students indicated that to be admitted to a four-year college, to raise their grade averages, and personal satisfaction or accomplishment were their highest ranked (composite) expectations. All of the expectations and their ranks are presented in Table 4. Rank order differences ($Rho = .97$) between the ILCC and JC students were attributed to chance.

The drop-in students indicated that their highest ranked (composite) plans upon leaving the two-year college were to transfer to some other four-year college, to transfer back to the four-year college of previous enrollment, and full-time work or employment. All plans and their ranks are presented in Table 5. Rank order differences ($Rho = .99$) between the ILCC and JC students were attributed to chance.

Insert Tables 4 and 5 about here

In response to item 5-A, the drop-in students were not hesitant to make comparisons of their experiences at the two-year college and their previously attended institution.

The most common statements in support of the two-year colleges emphasized (1) quality of instruction, (2) positive faculty-student relationships, (3) individual attention and concern, and (4) counseling services. The drop-in students did, however, make two specific criticisms of the two-year colleges. They perceived their respective colleges as (1) lacking a "collegiate" atmosphere and (2) having relatively few social, cultural, and recreational activities. The fact that they had dropped out of institutions of all sizes and types (for a wide variety of reasons) prevented more detailed analysis of their subjective statements.

In response to item 5-B, 37 of the 54 participants (68.5%) indicated that, if they had it to do over again, they would have attended the two-year college first (rather than the institution they had previously attended). Analysis of their responses is presented in Table 6. It was found that their responses (Yes-No) were independent of other criteria, such as sex, class (freshmen-sophomore), or two-year college in which they were presently enrolled.

Insert Table 6 about here

Discussion

The composite ranking of factors indicated that the drop-in student's reasons for dropping out of their previously attended institutions were relatively consistent with prior research. All students who had been suspended or dismissed (12 at ILCC and 8 at JC) indicated that as a factor. It must be assumed that a number of students voluntarily withdrew from their previously attended institutions to avoid the

possibility of such action. It was noted that 14 of the 54 participants had been on academic or disciplinary probation at the time of withdrawal.

The composite ranks of factors relating to two-year college selection were also similar to those of other studies. General institutional and geographical variables were probably the cause of the non-significant rank order correlation, however, between the ILCC and JC drop-in students. It was noted that many of the JC students had been referred to the two-year college by their previously attended institution.

It is significant to student personnel workers that personal satisfaction and accomplishment were among the most important expectations of the drop-in students. Many of the participants indicated plans to transfer to some other four-year institution, rather than to return to their previously attended institution. This reluctance was probably related to policies and regulations relative to minimum grade point average requirements at the previously attended institution. The majority of the participants seemed to have made satisfactory (though, perhaps, rather difficult) adjustments to their new environments. One student commented that he "would not have felt defeated" if he had first attended the two-year college!

Conclusions

Objective and subjective data relative to two-year college drop-in students were collected and analysed. The basic contentions that such students have unique perceptions of their experiences and their new environments have been both supported and verified.

The drop-in student's indicated (in most cases) that the advantages of the two-year college outweighed it's shortcomings or disadvantages. They were critical of the two-year college's lack of collegiate atmosphere and activities, but were relatively satisfied with their new institutions.

The two-year colleges perform a valuable salvage function through the admission of drop-in students. Many such institutions, however, are not aware of the number of drop-in students enrolled, do not consider them to be unique, and fail to provide any additional services for them. It is, of course, the institution's prerogative to encourage or to discourage the enrollment of drop-in students. If such students are admitted, they should receive more personal attention and assistance in adjusting to their new environments. It is suggested that each two-year college undertake similar research on it's drop-in students and develop relevant articulation programs and procedures.

It is strongly recommended that two-year college drop-in students (1) be included in special orientation programs and (2) receive additional individual and group counseling designed to meet their unique adjustment problems.

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TABLE 1
Drop-in Students According to Sex, Class, and College

Classification	Composite	ILCC	JC
Male	41	24	17
Female	13	8	5
Freshmen	27	15	12
Sophomore	27	17	10

TABLE 2
Factors Affecting Decision to Drop Out
of Previously Attended Institution

Response	Composite		ILCC		JC	
	Rank	Index Value	Rank	Index Value	Rank	Index Value
K. suspension/dismissal	1	40	1	24	2	16
F. cost/finances	2	38	2	21	1	17
I. lack of goals or motivation	3	24	3	13	3	11
E. lack of concern for students	4.5	17	7.5	9	4.5	8
*M. other: _____	4.5	17	5	10	6	7
H. location/distance	6	16	5	10	7.5	6
D. size of institution	7	15	5	10	9	5
C. marriage	8.5	13	12	5	4.5	8
G. lack of interest	8.5	13	7.5	9	10	4
J. class size and/or quality of teaching	10	11	12	5	7.5	6
B. homesickness	11.5	9	9	8	12	1
L. health	11.5	9	10	7	11	2
A. lack of part-time work opportunities	13	5	12	5	13	0

Rho (ILCC-JC) = .64 ($t = 2.74$) significant ($P < .05$)

*M. other: specific courses (2), poor grades (2), athletics, too competitive, number of room-mates, death in family, and math requirement (all one each).

TABLE 3
Factors Affecting College Selection by Drop-in Students

Response	Composite		ILCC		JC	
	Rank	Index Value	Rank	Index Value	Rank	Index Value
E. cost/finances	1	54	1	33	1.5	21
G. location/distance	2	51	2	30	1.5	21
D. parents and/or friends	3	33	3	27	8.5	6
H. increased interest	4	28	7	12	3	16
A. part-time work opportunities	5	26	4	19	7	7
F. class size and/or quality of teaching	6	24	7	12	5.5	12
B. size of institution	7	23	5	18	10	5
I. change of goals or motivation	8	22	9	10	5.5	12
C. concern for students	9.5	18	7	12	8.5	6
J. referral by college previously attended	9.5	18	11	5	4	13
*L. other: _____	11	10	10	6	11	4
K. avoid the "draft"	12	3	12	2	12	1

Rho (ILCC-JC) = .48 ($t = 1.73$) not significant ($P > .05$)

*L. other: athletics (3) open-door policy and less competitive (both one each).

TABLE 4

Expectations of the Drop-in Students in the Two-Year College

Response	Composite		ILCC		JC	
	Rank	Index Value	Rank	Index Value	Rank	Index Value
E. be admitted to a 4-year college	1	75	1	49	2	26
A. raise grade average	2	70	2	38	1	32
F. personal satisfaction/accomplishment	3	55	3	32	3	23
C. complete a 2 year Associate Degree	4	28	4	15	4	13
D. learn specific employment skills	5	9	5.5	5	5	4
B. avoid the "draft"	6	8	5.5	5	6	3
G. other: _____	7	0	7	0	7	0

Rho (ILCC-JC) = .97 ($t = 8.86$) significant ($P < .05$)

TABLE 5
Plans of Drop-in Students Upon Leaving the Two-Year College

Response	Composite		ILCC		JC	
	Rank	Index Value	Rank	Index Value	Rank	Index Value
D. transfer to some other 4-year college	1	71	1	46	1	25
C. transfer back to the 4-year college of previous enrollment	2	37	2	18	2	19
B. full-time work/employment	3	10	3	7	3	3
A. marriage	4	6	4	6	5	0
E. military service	5	1	5	1	5	0
F. other: _____	6	0	6	0	5	0

Rho (ILCC-JC) = .99 ($t = 13.99$) significant ($P < .05$)

TABLE 6

Responses Regarding Attending the Two-Year College First

	Sex		Class		College	
	Male	Female	Fresh.	Soph.	ILCC	JC
Yes	28 (68%)	9 (69%)	17 (63%)	20 (74%)	23 (71.5%)	14 (63.5%)
No	13 (32%)	4 (31%)	10 (37%)	7 (26%)	9 (28.5%)	8 (46.5%)
	χ^2 (Yates' Corr.) = .078 not significant ($P > .05$)		χ^2 (Yates' Corr.) = .343 not significant ($P > .05$)		χ^2 (Yates' Corr.) = .117 not significant ($P > .05$)	